

How can I whine when Larry Bird scores thirty points in a playoff game, then checks into a hospital with his bad back to have himself put in traction until the next game two days later?

How can I whine when Truman Capote spends six years roaming around Kansas doing research for In Cold Blood, not knowing if he even has a book?

How can I whine when Jack Kerouac gets it all down in a matter of a few weeks (single-spaced) on hundred foot teletype rolls?

How can I whine when Bukowski hand prints his stories and poems (having hocked his typewriter), has them returned and rejected, then throws them out and immediately writes more?

How can I whine, how can I wish, how can I want when there is the job, always the job before me?

#### REAR-VIEW MIRROR

Oh, I know, the state of modern poetry is shit. What else? Kids are dumber. Never mind about miraculous electronic invention after invention, or new medicines, new treatments, and eradicated illnesses — look at the sinking SAT scores. What else? Oh yeah, violence. Society is much more violent today. Tell me, class, how many wars were there, and how many people died in Europe because of them, during the hundred-year period beginning in .... What else? Discontent — people are much more unhappy now. Believe me, they'd rather be slaving 14 hours a day out in the fields, maybe sacrificing an animal or a person, hoping it'd help the crops grow. What else? Divorce — people get divorces today and don't even care. Sure, just go talk to somebody with kids who got a divorce; they'll tell you what a lark it was. Anyway, it's better that two people live together and hate each other — like my grandmother and grandfather. I never heard them talk to each other and not curse each other out. What else? TV — people watch too much TV today. No one reads long, boring, sappy Victorian novels anymore — books with page-long sentences where it takes someone twenty paragraphs to walk across a room. What else? You know what I miss? Those wonderfully comic civil rights marches down South where the governor would unleash dogs, firehoses, and clubs on non-violent protestors. And all because of separate bathrooms. So who's the next great lamentor of contemporary culture who'll quote that damn poem by Yeats saying that "The center cannot hold"? Ah, but that was when poetry had structure, and meaning, and everyone read it and enjoyed it.